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Natick board talks traffic, signs for 9/27 plaza

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NATICK – Planning Board members are supporting plans for a revamped parking lot associated with proposed improvements to the Rte. 9/ 27 plaza.

Plaza owners Crosspoint Associates and Finard Properties are looking to construct a 2,000-square-foot coffee shop in the property's northwest corner. Changes to the existing plaza would be focused around bringing new tenants to part of the northern building, which includes the closed Building 19 store.

The project would also create outdoor sales space for an existing flower and garden shop.

Planners have talked with project officials about ways to improve how traffic flows nearby.

The board on Wednesday supported a concept for the area by the entrance and exit off a Rte. 9 ramp. The state Department of Transportation must also weigh in.

Proponents have highlighted efforts to make improvements for drivers and pedestrians, including creating more space for cars to queue while waiting to turn onto Rte. 27.

The reconfigured lot would also allow cars traveling to the Stop & Shop part of the plaza to branch off quickly from the Rte. 27 entrance and exit drive, rather than traveling along the plaza building, proponents have said.

The latest plans show only one left-turn lane from the plaza onto Rte. 27, alleviating a concern about cars having to merge.

Board Chairman Julian Munnich said after the meeting that a decision on the project will need to prohibit two left turn lanes until the Rte.9/27 intersection is improved.

Planners took a detailed look Wednesday at signs, including grappling with desires of some tenants versus the town's sign rules. Planners are also weighing how much flexibility to have amid concerns that they do not set a precedent.

Project attorney Jim Hanrahan said he would try to develop proposed decision language that will be acceptable to board members.

Kerry McCormack, of Crosspoint Associates, said proponents are trying hard to revitalize a plaza that includes a rundown section. The signs are critical to attracting high-quality tenants, McCormack said.

The board plans to discuss the project again May 4.

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